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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000583

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STATE FOR SCA/CEN (NICOLAIDIS), SCA/PPD, EUR/ACE

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: BERDIMUHAMMEDOV FIRES MINISTER OF CULTURE, RECTOR OF  
TURKMEN-TURKISH UNIVERSITY

REFS: A) ASHGABAT 228;

B) ASHGABAT 307

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Summary  
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1. (U) In his June 8 Cabinet of Ministers meeting, President Berdimuhammedov fired Minister of Culture Enebay Atayeva and former Minister of Education-then-director of the International Turkmen Turkish University (ITTU) Shemshat Annagylyjova. Dismissing Atayeva with a reprimand for "serious short-comings," the president appointed a young new Minister of Culture from his hometown, Gokdepe. The new rector of ITTU, meanwhile, has substantive experience in Turkey. Meanwhile, both Dashoguz and Mary have new deputy hakims for education and culture; the transfer of post's friendly contact, Shirin Toychiyevna Ahmedova, from that post in Mary to that of head of the Institute for Democracy and Human Rights is probably positive, but may make her into more of a figurehead than an administrator. End Summary.

Ministry of Culture  
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2. (U) Enebay Atayeva's dismissal -- she was not named to an alternate post -- was expected; the president already has publicly criticized her, usually a sign that an official is on his/her way out. This time Berdimuhammedov chastised her for sloppiness in radio broadcasting, along with a more general charge that she failed to fulfill her duties. Atayeva led the ministry during a cooperative period with post; post is not familiar with 32 year-old new Minister Kakageldi Chariyardurdiyev, though he has more substantive experience in the cultural field than did Atayeva.

Turkmen-Turkish Rector Finally Gone  
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3. (U) ITTU Rector Shemshat Annagylyjova's dismissal also was no

surprise after the president failed to reconfirm her as Education Minister. Her successor, Rejepmuhammedova Geldiyeva graduated from the Azadi World Languages Institute in Turkish language and obtained her master's degree at a university in Ankara. Post is unfamiliar with Geldiyeva.

¶4. On the subject of educational reform, Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers Hydyr Saparlyev declared that all curriculum changes for secondary schools were complete and approved for the upcoming school year (Ref B). He also declared that many textbooks have been rewritten and approved for use, and emphasized the need to improve training in computer technology and use of the Internet. He also declared that all schools should be implementing interactive teaching methodologies, although he left open the question of how or when this training might take place. (Comment: During a June 9 visit to Turkmenabat, PDOff spoke to a Fulbright alumna and director of independent educational center Medet, who had organized a three-day seminar for local teachers and administrators on interactive teaching methodology. PDOff was present at the Center when the regional educational department representative in charge of schools, Kerimberdy Masharypov, called to thank the director for her help in providing this training. When PDOff asked Masharypov later in the day about why such training was taking place, he became nervous and said that such training took place as a part of regular training for teachers on an annual basis -- though it appears he had requested Medet's help in this case because of pressure from the highest levels of government, per Saparlyev's briefing to the president. End Comment.)

#### Welayat Education-Culture Movements

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¶5. (U)Long-time Mary Province Deputy Hakim for Education, Culture, Healthcare and Sports Shirin Ahmedova was named head of the Institute of Democracy and Human Rights. The institute's mandate is to serve as an ombudsman for legislation related to democracy and human rights, though the institute has never had much visibility. Under former director Shemshat Atajanova the institute cooperated

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with post by sending its representatives to attend post-sponsored conferences and recently hosting post-sponsored speaker Dr. Gregory Payne. Ahmedova's successor in Mary is Gulyalek Amanova.

¶6. (U) Dashoguz also has a new deputy hakim responsible for the above sectors: Shemshat Mammedova.

#### Biographical Note

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¶7. (U) Chariyardurdiyev was appointed Minister of Culture and TV/Radio Broadcasting on June 8, having served since 2004 as head of the Schools, Museums and Libraries Department of the Ministry. From 1997 to 2004 he worked as a teacher at his alma mater, the Turkmen State Institute of Culture, as a teacher, senior teacher, and head of the Arts and Creativity Department, the department responsible for applied and fine arts, archaeology and restoration-conservation.

In 1995 he completed his four-year degree at the Institute of Culture, and spent 1996-1997 doing his mandatory military service. He was born in 1974 in Gokdepe of Gokdepe Etrap of Ahal Welayat and until entering the institute he worked as a farmer in Gokdepe.

#### Comment

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¶8. (SBU) These firings are as notable for their style as for their substance. Berdimuhammedov appears most comfortable aping Niyazov's style and peculiar habits. Post has yet to observe him truly divert from Niyazov's bad habits. Niyazov's huge portraits throughout the country are being replaced by Berdimuhammedov's, media remains essentially identical to the Niyazov era, i.e., centered exclusively around the president and his activities, and Berdimuhammedov quotes are popping up on banners and on the newspaper mastheads. More importantly, his public style of government remains essentially Niyazovian -- the president is perceived as hiring and firing everyone and as the final arbiter on all decisions. Post continues

to hope that these bad habits are more a reflection of Soviet-style routine than on Berdimuhammedov's intent to rectify the more egregious insults Niyazov visited on the people of Turkmenistan. After all he is using Niyazov's style to fire Niyazov's circle.

[19](#). (SBU) Post is sorry to see Atayeva leave, she was friendly and relatively cooperative. Nursery school teacher cum university rector Annagylyjova's departure should be a plus. End Comment.

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